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QUEENS WOMAN CONVICTED OF MURDER
IN STABBING DEATH OF IMMIGRATION LAWYER
Defendant Faces Up to 25 Years-to-Life in Prison at Sentencing

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Xiaoning Zhang, 27, has been convicted of murder, criminal possession of a weapon and charges for the killing of her immigration lawyer, Jim Li, who had dropped her as a client shortly before the incident. The victim was renowned for his legal work and was an activist during the Tiananmen Square uprising in China in 1989.

District Attorney Katz said, “Jim Li was a renowned immigration attorney in Flushing and hero for his actions in Tiananmen Square. After meeting with Xiaoning Zhang, he agreed to represent her pro bono in her immigration matters. When the defendant’s demands and lies about her circumstances became apparent, Li told Zhang he could no longer represent her. The defendant, filled with anger and animus, went to Li’s law practice several days later armed with two knives and repeatedly stabbed him. A jury weighed the trial evidence, and after careful consideration, found this defendant guilty of this senseless murder. We extend our condolences to Mr. Li’s many family members and friends, both in the legal community and around the world.”

Zhang, of Kissena Boulevard in Flushing, Queens, was found guilty today of murder in the second degree, criminal possession of a weapon in the fourth degree, menacing in the third degree, criminal obstruction of breathing or blood circulation and harassment in the second degree. Queens Supreme Court Justice Kenneth C. Holder, who presided at trial, scheduled sentencing for October 2, 2024, at which time Zhang faces up to 25-years -to-life in prison.

Trial openings began on September 9, 2024, and closings occurred on September 19, 2024. The jury deliberated for one day.

According to the trial records, on March 11, 2022, police were called to the law office of Mr. Jim Li in Flushing regarding a disturbance. Zhang was insistent that Li, who was handling her asylum request pro bono, also work to have a photo of the defendant at a United Nations protest removed from the internet. Li told her he could not do that, which enraged the defendant. Zhang then admitted to Li that she had lied on her asylum application about being raped by Beijing police in China. Li then told Zhang he would no longer represent her in the immigration matter.

The defendant was asked to leave, but Zhang refused, according to trial testimony, and instead reacted by grabbing Li by the neck and choking him. Responding police escorted the defendant out of the building and reiterated that she was not to return.

Three days later, on March 14, 2022, according to trial records, the defendant went back to Li’s law office in Flushing. The defendant was armed with a paring knife and a larger kitchen knife. She confronted the victim again and this time repeatedly stabbed the victim in the chest and neck. A member of Li’s staff held Zhang until police arrived and placed the defendant under arrest.

The 66-year-old immigration lawyer was rushed to a nearby hospital, where he died.

Assistant District Attorney Kenneth Zawistowski, of the District Attorney’s Homicide Bureau, prosecuted the case with the assistance of Assistant District Attorney Samantha Tighe, of the Felony Trials Bureau III, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Karen Ross, Cold Case Unit Chief and Homicide Bureau Deputy Chief, and John Kosinski, Homicide Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Shawn Clark.

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